

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 04544 131234Z

44

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 ACDA-07 SAJ-01 IO-13 /091 W

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P R 131129Z JUL 5

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8559

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 4544

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SY, LE

SUBJECT: VISIT TO DAMASCUS OF LEBANESE CHRISTIAN DELEGATION

GOES UNREPORTED;

1. DAMASCUS MEDIA HAS NOT PUBLICIZED NEWS OF JULY 11 VISIT TO DAMASCUS, WHICH WE UNDERSTAND INCLUDED MEETING WITH FONMIN KHADDAM, OF LEADING LEBANESE PHALANGE AND CHAMOUNIST PERSONALITIES.

2. AT POLISH RECEPTION JULY 12, CPS SEC GEN KHALID BAGHDASH AND HIS DEPUTY YUSIF FAISAL TOLD ME THAT DELGEGATION CONSISTED OF KARIM PAKRADOUNI, LUCIAN DAHDAH, EITHER DANNY OR DORY CHAMOUN, BASHIR JAMAYAL AND ONE OTHER. FAISAL COMMENTED THAT VISIT OF THIS HIGH-LEVEL DELEGATION WAS SIGNIFICANT COMING ON HEELS OF SERIES OF CHRISTIAN VICTORIES.

HE SPECULATED THAT IT MIGHT FORESHADOW A NEW POLITICAL INITIATIVE IN THE LEBANESE CONFLICT,
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PAGE 02 DAMASC 04544 131234Z

3. BAGHDASH THEN INTERJECTED HE ASSUMED USG WAS VERY HAPPY WITH THE WAY THINGS WERE GOING IN THE ME AREA, PARTICULARLY THE RIYADH CONFERENCE AND THE WAR IN LEBANON. REPLIED WE WERE, OF COURSE, HAPPY WITH THE RIYADH CONFERENCE IN THAT IT WAS A STEP TOWARDS SYRO-EGYPTIAN COOPERATION WITHOUT WHICH WE SAW SERIOUS OBSTACLES IN THE WAY OF FURTHER MOVEMENT TOWARDS ARAB/ISRAELI PEACE. HE WAS DEAD WRONG, HOWEVER, ABOUT OUR VIEWS ON THE LEBANESE CONFLICT. WE DEEPLY REGRETTED ITS TRAGIC WASTE OF LIFE AND THE FACT THAT WAR HAD SET BACK PROGRESS TOWARDS PEACE IN AREA. BAGHDASH THEN ASSERTED WE FAVORED PARTITION OF LEBANON. I DENIED THIS, SAYING WE SEE IT AS PRESCRIPTION FOR CONTINUED CIVIL WAR. BAGHDASH SEEMED A BIT SURPRISED AND REHEARSED MY POINTS ALOUD TWICE, POSSIBLY TO BE DEBATED AT SOME FUTURE MEETING AT SYRIAN COMMUNIST PARTY COUNCILS.

4. THERE WAS GENERAL SCEPTICISM EXPRESSED BY DIPLOMATS AND SYRIAN OFFICIALS ALIKE AT RECEPTION THAT THE LEBANESE CHRISTIAN APPETITE FOR DOMINATING THE PALESTINIANS HAD BEEN SATIATED BY THE CONQUEST OF TEL ZAATAR, JISR AL-BASHA AND THEIR OTHER SUCCESSES IN TERRITORY NOW UNDER THEIR CONTROL ALONG THE NORTHERN COAST.

5. COMMENT:

IT WOULD BE MOST USEFUL FOR ASAD AT THIS STAGE IN TERMS OF BLUNTING DOMESTIC CRITICISM TO APPEAR TO BE LOWERING THE BOOM ON THE LEBANESE CHRISTIANS FOR A CHANGE, FOR EXAMPLE BY INSISTING THEY CALL OFF ANY FURTHER CAMPAIGNS AGAINST THE PALESTINIANS. THERE IS, HOWEVER, NO INDICATION HE IS PREPARING TO DO SO. THE UNCERTAINTIES EXPRESSED ABOUT ASAD'S INTENTIONS IN LEBANON BY DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES, SENIOR SYRIAN OFFICIALS AND NATIONAL PROGRESSIVE FRONT LUMINARIES DEMONSTRATED HOW EQUALLY UNINFORMED WE ALL ARE.
MURPHY

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NNN

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